

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The Stone Diaries is a novel written by a Canadian author named Carol Shields. The book which consists of 361 pages is firstly published in 1993 by Random House Canada and includes ten chapters. It tells about the life of a woman named Daisy Stone Goodwill from birth until death. The division of every chapter in the book represents the sequence of Daisy's lives from Birth (1905), Childhood (1916), Marriage (1927), Love (1936), Motherhood (1947), Work (1955-1964), Sorrow (1965), Ease (1977), Illness and Decline (1985), and Death. *The Stone Diaries* is written in a form of autobiography or biography. Like most books of biography, the author also presents a family picture and family tree in her work.

Carol Shields was born in June 2, 1935 in Oak Park, Illinois. After graduating from Oak Park high school, she studied at Hanover College and in 1955 she received a United Nations Scholarship to study abroad. Afterwards she went to University of Exeter, England to take English literature. She was married to Donald Shield, a professor of Engineering in 1957 and moved to Canada. She began her writing career by writing poems and short story. Her first poems were published in two books, *Others* in 1972 and *Intersect* in 1974. The mother of five

children received her Master arts degree from University of Ottawa in 1975 and then she started to write novel. Lots of her books have won many reward, such as *Small Ceremony* (1976) have won Canadian Association Award, *Fitting Behavior* (1984) won second price in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation annual Literary Award, *Swann: A Mystery* (1986) won The Arthur Ellis Award for the best Canadian mystery, *Larry's Party* (1997) won the Orange Prize and Le Prix de Lire. Beside poem, short story and novel, Shields also wrote stage play such as *Departure and Arrival* (1984) and *Thirteen Hands* (1993). Carol Shield died in July 16, 2003 because of breast cancer.

One of the greatest works of Carol Shields is *The Stone Diaries*. It tells about life of an ordinary woman named Daisy Stone Goodwill. Her mother is Mercy Stone, an obese woman, an orphan who has limited knowledge but skilled in household management. Her father is a stone mason. He comes from a joyless family and also has limited schooling. They married in 1903 in Manitoba and two years after, they were shocked by the birth of a daughter. Daisy's birth was unexpected. Her mother did not know that she was pregnant because as an orphan she lacked of education about female problem and her father moreover did not have an idea that her wife would have a baby. They did not realize the change of Mercy's body because she was a fat woman. Mercy died immediately after she gave birth to Daisy. Then Clarentine, their neighbor adopted the baby and decided to abandon her husband. Afterwards she went to Winnipeg to have a new life with her son Barker. Cuyler was in deep mourning remembering his wife who left him

so suddenly and moreover gave him an unexpected baby. Because of that he built a monument upon her grave to remind him to Mercy.

Daisy lived with Clarentine and Barker until she was 11 years old before then her father claimed her and took her with him to Bloomington, Indiana where he would be employed as a stone carver. Cuyler became a quite successful businessman in there and Daisy enjoyed her life. When she was 22 years old, she was married to Harold Hoad, a young big drinker man from Indiana. Her relation with her mother in law was not quite good. Harold was killed, fall from the room's window, when they just arrived in Paris for honeymoon. Nine years after the tragedy, she decided to go to Canada to visit her uncle Barker who she has not seen since her childhood. Daisy and Barker then married in 1936. Many speculations rose because of her marriage with Barker who 22 years elder than her. From their marriage they have three children named Alice, Warren and Joan.

During her years of marriage, she spent as a housewife, bringing up the children and looking after her garden. Her husband often goes out of country that she never knew what for it is and she also never asked. In April 1955 her father died and two months after, her husband followed. A couple months later, she occupied the gardening column in Record Megazine that used to be her husband's. During her work years she drowned herself in her duty that is writing articles and answering her fans' mail. She lost her job after nine years writing for column, a man named Pinky Fulham took over it. Depression came to her in 1965 when she turned to 59 years old. Some argued that it was the result of losing her

job but according to her, it was not. She was tired to be sad all her life and not mind for the sadness she suffered.

In 1977 she sold her Ottawa house and moved to Florida in order to live near with her friends Beans and Fraidy. When she was 72 years old, her life turned ease. She went to Orkney Island with her grandniece, Victoria and she met her father in law, Magnus Flett, who she never knew before. She got ill, hearth attack and kidney failure, when she was 80 years old. And she died in the year of nineties in Florida.

The Stone Diaries is a work of fiction which has won many rewards such as Canada's Governor General Award for fiction that year, US National Book Critics Award, McNally Robinson Award for Manitoba Book of the year 1994, Canadian Bookseller's Association Prize 1995 and the Pulitzer Prize. This book was also selected as one of the best book of the year by Publisher weekly and considered as notable book by the New York Times book review. The reviewer, Parini (March 27, 1994) wrote that "*The Stone Diaries* reminds us why literature matters". This fictional autobiography or biography became national bestseller and it is very popular in Canada, United States, and also Great Britain.

Since it was published in 1993, many positive responses have been addressed to this book. However, most of those responses come from female readers because the novel is an illustration of women's life. One of the customers from Amazon wrote a review in April 22, 2000: "This is a brilliant book I would recommend it to anyone who likes a story about real people and their emotions".

Despite many good responses there are also negative responses toward *The Stone Diaries*, the anonymous reader argued on Oct 21, 2001 that it was disappointing, although the book was written in autobiography there seemed to be a sense of distance between the character and the reader because there was something hidden about Daisy (<http://www.amazon.co.uk/product-reviews/>).

The researcher chose this novel to be analyzed because it was very interesting. Firstly, this fiction was written in uncommon style. The language used was also beautiful and emotional. It was presented in the form of autobiography or biography but it called itself as a diary. The story was told not only in a narration style but in letter format. There was one chapter in the novel only contains letters from Daisy's editor, her fans, child, and friends but none of Daisy's response was included. And one thing that made this book more unique was the author inserted family picture inside like the characters really existed but there was not any picture of Daisy. It exemplified about the woman who has lost her self-recollection.

Secondly stone seemed to be one of the topics of this book. It took place in Canada began from 1903 when most of its inhabitants worked in the stone quarry and as stone carvers. However the interesting thing was the word "stone" itself became the name of the character and the title of the book. It did not mean that the book was about Daisy Stone's life story written in diary format so it was called *The Stone Diaries* but stone symbolized Daisy Stone Goodwill as a woman who remained silence as long as her life.

Thirdly, the plot of this novel seemed obscure. Carol Shields in her interview with Penguin Books said that “*The Stone Diaries* didn’t seem to have a plot”. It did not offer a conventional plot like most novels commonly. The book was divided into ten chapters that performed the sequence of one’s life from birth until death. The story also looked flat. It did not show a palpable conflict. Yet it was still interesting because the story was very emotional.

Fourthly, the narrator of the story seemed inconsistent. The author used first person point of view in the first chapter, and then shifted to third person and shifted back to first person. There were some parts that Daisy told her own story and then other characters were arisen to tell about her in the other parts. Her inconsistency as a story teller made a sort of bewilderment in comprehending this book, whether Daisy herself narrated the whole story considering that the book itself was called a diary, in other words what other characters told was only Daisy’s imagination or perhaps other characters indeed participating in telling about her. Carol Shields in an interview with Penguin Book said that the other voices in her novel represented “Daisy’s fantasies of what other people imagined about her.”

Finally, this novel presented about life phenomenon. The story was poignant since it told about a woman’s life, how she experienced her life within the feeling of desperation as a result of abandonment and disappointment, how she responsible to her existence in this world, as a women and as a human being. The writer thought Daisy as a master of her own life has lost her goal and viewed

that her life was meaningless and as a consequence all she has done seemed empty. She did not know what she wanted and she just let something happen to her life without minding it.

Based on the reasons above the writer is interested in revealing the existential theme in *The Stone Diaries*. Daisy Stone Goodwill as the major character has experienced a void inside her. Hence the writer attracted in conducting research toward this novel by using existentialist criticism and take existential nihilism as the issue.

B. Literature Review

The Stone Diaries is a novel with many achievements. Therefore it is not surprising that some people have been attracted to conduct research toward this artistic work. The first researcher who studied this book is Sara Megan Evans (1996) from McMaster University who entitled her research *Toward A Postmodern Multiculturalism?: Issues of Identity in Carol Shields's The Stone Diaries*. Through her research (Evans, thesis, 1996: iv) she found that “as postmodernism encourages a healthy cultural and ethnic exchange at the national level, it ironically obscures cultural and ethnic roots at the individual level and exposes the individual to the threat of isolation and meaninglessness”.

The second researcher is Maria Jesus Hernaes Lerena from La Rioja University. The title of her essay is *Narratives Genre and the Administration of Consciousness: the Case of Daisy Goodwill's Rebellion*. Her essay is conducted

to analyze the implication of *The Stone Diaries*' protagonist stance with a view to pinning down some of the ideological grounds of the novel and of the short story in their approach to question of identity (Lerena, *Journal of English Studies*, vol.5-6, 2005-2008: 155).

The third researcher comes from University of Saskatchewan named Martin Edward Winquist (2009) with the research title *Creating Absence for Acknowledge Presence: Rational Subjectivity and Postmodernism in Carol Shield's The Stone Diaries*. His research is conducted to investigate the relationship between postmodernist discourse and feminist discourse.

The fourth research is *Graven Lives of Hagar and Daisy: Image of Feminine Depression in Lauren's The Stone Angle and Shield's The Stone Diaries* (1998) conducted by Carol Megan Davis from McMaster university. In her thesis (1998: v) she concluded that Daisy's life stories illustrate a normal situation to women in the patriarchal society and depression is the result of women's attempt to survive in the wilderness society (for women).

Most of the thesis above criticize *The Stone Diaries* from the feminist and postmodernist perspective; however the writer interested in criticizing the novel using existentialist criticism and concern with existential nihilism reflected in Daisy Goodwill.

C. Limitation of the Study

The limitation of this thesis is the main character, Daisy Stone Goodwill and the other characters in the novel are used to help the writer analyze the issue reflected in Daisy by using Sartre's theory of existentialism and Nietzsche's theory of nihilism.

D. Problem Statement

This study aims to answer these following questions:

1. What are the indicators of existential nihilism that are reflected in Carol Shields's *The Stone Dairies*?
2. Why did Carol Shields necessarily address the issue of existential nihilism in her *The Stone Diaries*?

E. Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem statement above, the intention of this thesis are:

1. To identify the indicators of existential nihilism that are reflected in Carol Shields's *The Stone Dairies*.
2. To reveal why Carol Shields necessarily address the issue of existential nihilism in her *The stone Diaries*.

F. Benefit of the Study

The analysis on Carol Shield's novel, *The Stone Diaries*, is expected to bring the following benefits:

1. Theoretically, this study is expected to provide a contribution to the wider body of knowledge specifically in English literary theory.
2. Practically, this study is expected to improve the writer's ability in understanding about literary work and enrich her knowledge about literary criticism.

G. Research Method

1. Type of the Study

In conducting this study the writer apply qualitative research. First of all, she makes library research in order to collect the data and information about Carol Shields's works. Then she begins to do internet research about Carol Shields's biography, book reviews, criticism, research, and theory to help the writer analyze the novel.

2. Object of the Study

The object of this study is Carol Shields's novel *The Stone Diaries* which published in 1993 by Random Book Canada.

3. Type of the Data and the Data Source

The type of the data in this study is text and there are two data sources namely primary and secondary data which presented as follows:

a. Primary Data

The primary data of this thesis is Carol Shields's novel *The Stone Diaries* published in 1993 by Random House Canada which consist of 361 pages.

b. Secondary Data

The secondary data of this study are works or any information related to the data required such as Author's biography, the data taken from official website, books of Existentialism, and etc.

4. Technique of the Data Collection

The technique used in collecting data is note taking and the steps are as follows:

- a. Reading and comprehending both primary and secondary data for several times
- b. Classifying the data into some groups based on its theoretical category.
- c. Selecting particular parts considered important and relevant for analysis.
- d. Drawing conclusion and formulate its pedagogical suggestion.

5. Technique of the Data analysis

After the data is collected the writer will analyze it using descriptive analysis. The writer will interpret the data and relate it with the existentialism and nihilism theory.

H. Research Paper Organization

This research paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is introduction which consists of background of the study, objective of the study, limitation of the study, benefits of the study, research method, and research paper organization. The second chapter is underlying theory; it elaborates the theory of existentialism and the concept of existential nihilism. The third chapter deals with structural analysis of the novel. It will analyze the structural elements such as character, plot, setting, point of view, theme and style. The fourth chapter performs the analysis of the novel using existentialist criticism. And the last chapter presents conclusion and suggestion from the researcher.